



PARENTS' GUIDE *to the*  
**CIVIL AIR PATROL**  
CADET PROGRAM

LEADERSHIP  
AEROSPACE  
FITNESS  
CHARACTER





Cadets take a selfie with two Air Force Thunderbird pilots, who are themselves former CAP cadets.

## The CAP Core Values

- ★ INTEGRITY
- ★ VOLUNTEER SERVICE
- ★ EXCELLENCE
- ★ RESPECT

## Key Traits of Cadet Life

- ★ THE UNIFORM
- ★ AEROSPACE THEME
- ★ OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD
- ★ CHALLENGE
- ★ FUN

## The Cadet Oath

*"I pledge that I will serve faithfully  
in the Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program  
and that I will attend meetings regularly,  
participate actively in unit activities,  
obey my officers,  
wear my uniform properly  
and advance my education and training rapidly  
to prepare myself to be of service  
to my community, state and nation."*



*Civil Air Patrol appeals to young people who set high standards and want to do something big.*

**THANK YOU** for supporting your son's or daughter's membership in the Civil Air Patrol's Cadet Program.

Through their experiences as CAP cadets, young people develop into responsible citizens and become tomorrow's aerospace leaders.

CAP is the volunteer, nonprofit auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force. Its three missions are to develop its cadets, educate Americans on the importance of aviation and space, and perform life-saving, humanitarian missions.

This guide provides an overview of the Cadet Program. To learn more, visit [capmembers.com/parents](https://capmembers.com/parents), or speak with your local squadron commander.

# Overview of the Cadet Program

To fulfill its goal of developing young people into responsible citizens and aerospace leaders, the Cadet Program is organized around four program elements.

As cadets participate in these four elements, they advance through a series of achievements, earning honors and increased responsibilities along the way.

for more ► [capmembers.com/ranks](https://www.capmembers.com/ranks)



*Cadets learn that leadership isn't about raw power but the capacity to serve others.*

## Leadership

CAP introduces cadets to Air Force perspectives on leadership through classroom instruction, mentoring and hands-on learning. First, cadets learn to follow, but as they progress, they learn how to lead small teams, manage projects, think independently and develop leadership skills they can use in adult life.



*Where's the best place to study aerospace?  
The cockpit.*

## Aerospace & STEM

CAP inspires in youth a love of aviation, space and technology. Cadets study the fundamentals of aerospace science in the classroom, and experience flight first-hand in CAP aircraft. Training in cyber defense is a new frontier. At summer activities, cadets explore STEM careers.

## How Cadets “Rank Up”

- ✓ Pass open-book leadership test online, and a drill and ceremonies test
- ✓ Pass open-book aerospace test online
- ✓ Participate in a fitness activity
- ✓ Participate in a character forum
- ✓ Participate actively in unit activities
- ✓ 8 weeks’ (56 days’) elapsed since previous achievement

- ✓ Have demonstrated the attitudes, behaviors, and skills identified as the achievement’s “Leadership Expectations”
- ✓ Optional: feedback meeting
- ✓ **Recognition:** Additional stripe, ribbon, more challenges, and excitement



This is a simplified checklist. Requirements vary at certain steps in the program. See [capmembers.com/ranks](http://capmembers.com/ranks)



*Being a cadet means getting yourself into shape and growing stronger.*

## Fitness

CAP encourages cadets to develop a lifelong habit of regular exercise. The Cadet Program promotes fitness through calisthenics, hiking, rappelling, volleyball, competitions and other activities.



*Cadets don't just honor America, they solidify their character.*

## Character

CAP challenges cadets to live their Core Values. Through character forums, cadets discuss ethical issues relevant to teens. Chaplains often lead the discussions, but the forums are not religious meetings. CAP also encourages cadets to promote a drug free ethic in their schools and communities.

## Flightplan *for a* Great First Year

Our checklist for an awesome first year is shown below. Once cadets get going, they may want to make CAP their top priority, but we teach that school and family come first. Still, if a cadet will be absent, he or she is expected to tell local leaders. And while teens' interests can change, CAP asks cadets to give the program a try for a full year.

- Attend weekly squadron meetings regularly.
- Attend one "Saturday" event per month, if available.
- Complete Achievement 1 within 8 weeks of joining CAP.
- Attend the week-long, overnight encampment.
- Complete the Wright Brothers Award by the end of the first year.
- Recruit a friend and make lots of new friends, too.

## Encampment

The highlight of a cadet's first year is the encampment, a week-long immersion into a regimented environment. Cadets develop leadership skills, explore STEM and military careers, challenge themselves on obstacle courses, and have a lot of fun in the process.

We want every cadet to attend, so please mark the calendar now (local leaders will provide details, or you can visit the link below). Tuition averages \$150 to \$300, and scholarships are available through the Cadet Encampment Assistance Program.

for more ► [capmembers.com/encampment](http://capmembers.com/encampment)



*Teenaged cadets bravely face new challenges, and learn how to take risks safely and responsibly.*

## Flying

Many cadets receive their first flight in an airplane, thanks to CAP.



CAP's volunteer pilots share their love of flying with cadets. Through orientation flights in powered aircraft and gliders, cadets experience flight first-hand.

While aloft, cadets handle the controls during the noncritical stages of the flight. CAP's pilots are licensed by the

FAA, follow a syllabus for each flight, and ensure the flight is conducted safely.

Cadets may also receive orientation flights in military aircraft. Orientation flights are free to cadets.

for more ► [capmembers.com/flying](https://www.capmembers.com/flying)

## The Future

To help cadets plan for an exciting future, CAP offers college and flight scholarships.

And, while they are not obligated to join the military, cadets who earn the Mitchell Award can enter the Air Force at an advanced pay grade (E-3).

The service academies and ROTC also look favorably on CAP experience. About 8% of Air Force Academy cadets are former CAP cadets, and the Academy's Preparatory School sets aside at least one slot for CAP cadets annually.

for more ► [capmembers.com/scholarships](https://www.capmembers.com/scholarships)



Cadets develop self-discipline that translates into academic success. 82% earn B's or better at school.

# Cadet Membership



Cadets make friends with other teens who share their values and goals.

## Annual Dues

Cadets' annual dues vary by location. Additionally, cadets may be charged fees to cover meal and lodging costs at special activities.

Because CAP is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, membership dues, donations and other CAP-related expenses may be tax deductible.

## Cadet Welcome Kit

Shortly after joining CAP, cadets receive a Welcome Kit in the mail. The Welcome Kit includes a special guide for new cadets, leadership and aerospace textbooks, and other resources to help cadets get started in CAP.

for more ► [capmembers.com/newcadet](http://capmembers.com/newcadet)

## Uniforms

The Air Force-style uniform is a symbol of the Core Values, inspiring cadets to think of themselves as young leaders.

Cadets will need a uniform to advance in the program. The suggested best practice is for each cadet to obtain a utility (camouflage) uniform as soon as possible. Your squadron may be able to provide some articles for free. Two versions are available, "ABUs" and "BDUs." The approximate cost is \$150.

Upon completing Achievement 1, CAP provides cadets with a *Curry Blues Voucher* for the dress "blues" uniform. Again, some articles may be available for free locally. The approximate cost is \$150, less a \$100 voucher.

When a cadet outgrows a uniform or leaves CAP, we ask families to turn those items in to the squadron so other cadets might use them.



for details on purchasing & preparing uniforms, see the New Cadet Guide ► [capmembers.com/newcadet](http://capmembers.com/newcadet)



## Safety & Adult Supervision

CAP is a safe, positive environment that uses an age-appropriate, military-style learning model to challenge young people. While cadet life is regimented, we do not tolerate any form of abusive behavior or hazing. Here are some ways we keep youth safe:

- Every CAP adult leader has been fingerprinted and passed a criminal background check.
- Every CAP adult leader has been trained in how to mentor youth in a positive way.
- Every CAP activity (with a few, rare exceptions) will be supervised by at least two CAP adult leaders.
- We structure our activities so that opportunities for isolated, one-on-one contact with cadets are minimized.
- Your local squadron will announce cadet activities via a web calendar, so you can know what events are upcoming.
- You'll be given written information each time a special activity is held, and be asked to sign a permission slip.
- If an adult leader is transporting a cadet, at least one other person will be in the vehicle.
- While older, experienced cadets act as servant-leaders over younger, new-comer cadets, they always do so under adult supervision.
- Each cadet has a "wingman" for peer-to-peer support and safety.
- We teach cadets to look out for their wingman's safety and we tell cadets that if they think inappropriate behavior is occurring, they are to tell any trusted adult, without fear of retaliation.

for more ► [capmembers.com/cadetprotect](https://capmembers.com/cadetprotect)

**"I'm a detective who specializes in crimes against children. CAP's safety training is well-researched and put together. The issues of grooming and how it takes place are spot on. I'm proud of how seriously CAP takes this issue."**

Capt Jim Schilling, CAP  
Minnesota

## Special Needs & Inclusivity

If your cadet has a disability or other special need, please talk with the local leaders. We are committed to doing everything we reasonably can to help each cadet succeed. We're especially proud of cadets who work hard and lead by example, despite a learning or physical disability. Please know there's no reason to hide your cadet's special need.

for more ► [capmembers.com/specialneeds](https://capmembers.com/specialneeds)



# Our Philosophy *for* Developing Youth

Cadet life is a young person's opportunity to flourish. When a cadet puts on her uniform, she sees herself differently and begins to ask, Who am I? What do I stand for? To be a cadet is to take your personal growth seriously.

## Good Habits

Accordingly, CAP instills self-discipline, understood as the habit of following a set of Core Values to achieve goals that better yourself and the community. We hope those goals will involve aerospace careers, but if not, we're pleased if we've helped form responsible citizens.

## Status as Young Adults

The cadets' seriousness of purpose distinguishes them as *young adults, not children*. While we remain committed to ongoing dialogue with parents, we want to see cadets – not parents – prepare their own uniforms, follow-through on commitments they make, and use the cadet chain of command to resolve their questions and concerns.

## Resilience

CAP is a safe place to learn. Challenge is a key aspect of cadet life, so we support cadets as they try new experiences, knowing that they may not



*When young cadets rank-up, their self-confidence grows.*

succeed fully at first. We believe that affording cadets freedom to make mistakes builds resilience. We ask parents not to hover, but to give their cadet the space they need to grow.

## Homesickness

Cadets may feel homesick during their first overnight activity. Local leaders are prepared to mentor cadets through the experience. We find it helpful if parents express confidence in the cadet's ability to succeed, and not hedge with promises of an early pickup or frequent texts and phone calls.

## Priorities

Cadets are required to maintain "satisfactory progress" in school, as determined by their parents. We want participation in cadet activities to be a reward for responsible behavior and good grades.

# An Invitation to Participate

Parents are welcome to observe all CAP activities. There are no secret meetings.

## Addressing Concerns

As a parent, any time you have a question or concern, please contact the local squadron commander. CAP takes parents' concerns very seriously.

If local leaders are unable to resolve an issue to your satisfaction, your wing (state) leaders will gladly help.

## Adult Membership

CAP can always use more adult volunteers. If you are willing to serve occasionally as a chaperone or driver, consider joining as a *Cadet Sponsor Member*. If you are interested in participating more fully in CAP's missions, consider joining as a *Senior Member*.

## Parents' Committee

Parents can support the cadets in their local squadron without officially joining CAP by serving on a parents' committee. Some ways parents can help include:

- asking area businesses to make financial or in-kind donations
- organizing a carpool system
- planning an awards night or pot luck dinner
- helping the squadron connect with local civic groups
- serving as a guest speaker
- spreading the news about CAP and helping recruit new members.

for more ► [capmembers.com/parents](http://capmembers.com/parents)



*CAP is a great activity for the whole family. Many cadets have recruited their parents, with Mom or Dad continuing to volunteer after the kids have grown.*

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# Testimonials

"The feeling of being up in the air and looking down, of being in control of the plane, if only for a moment, is absolutely amazing!"

CADET PAIGE BARDEN  
Michigan

"One of the big things [about being a cadet officer] is learning to think on a higher level."

CADET EVAN TODD  
Ohio

"I made my first solo flight at a CAP encampment."

ASTRONAUT ERIC BOE  
Texas

"I liked the rappelling. I did something I thought I couldn't do!"

CADET LYDIA JUDGE  
Maryland



*Today's cadets . . . tomorrow's aerospace leaders*

